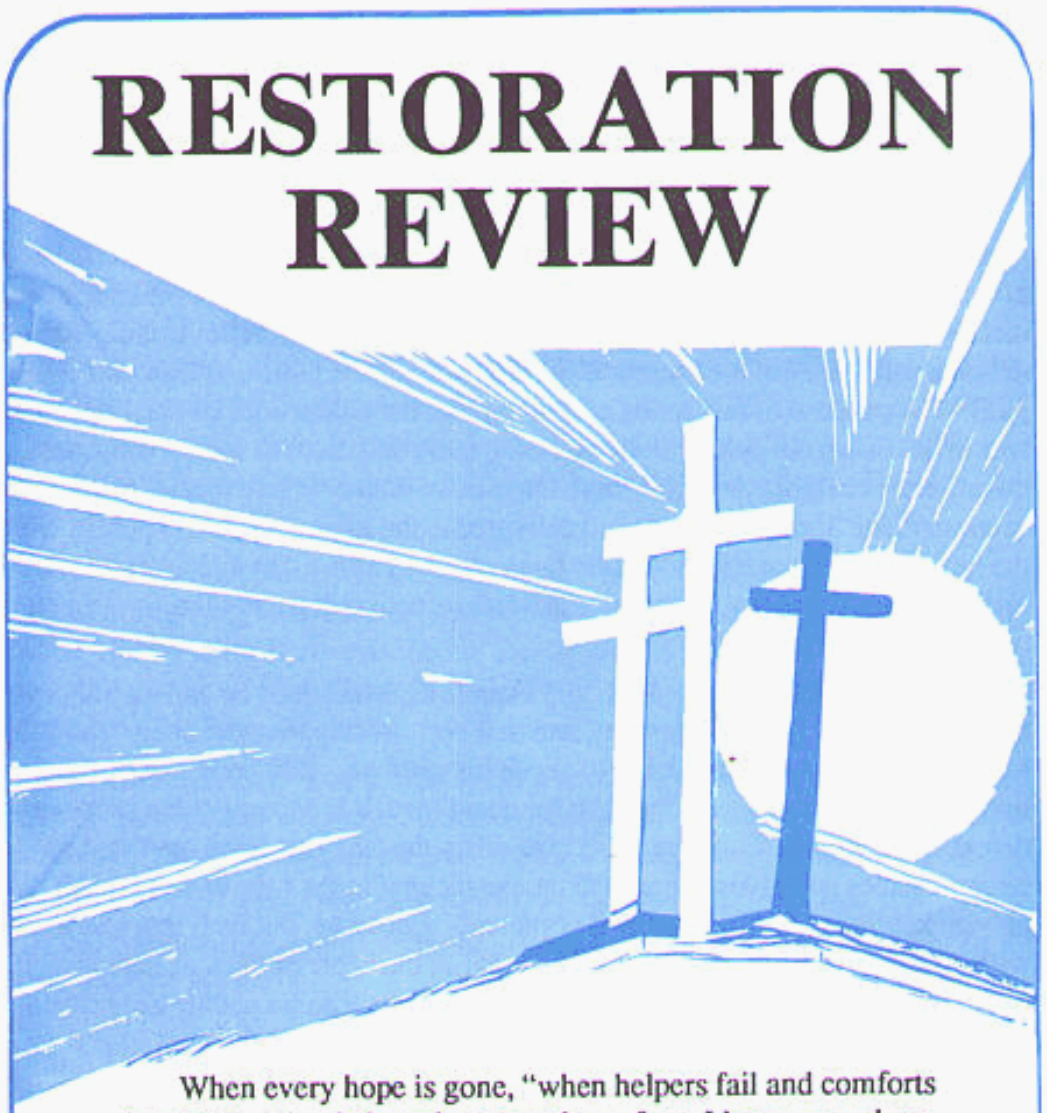
RESTORATION REVIEW



When every hope is gone, "when helpers fail and comforts flee," I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstitions; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal. — *Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi*

Beginning With This Issue:
A new series on
THE HOPE OF THE BELIEVER

Volume 31, No. 1 Leroy Garrett, Editor January, 1989

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The Hope of the Believer...No. 1

THE GOD OF HOPE: THE BASIS OF ALL HOPE

With this issue we begin a new series on the hope of the believer, which is variously referred to in Scripture as the living hope, the hope of salvation, the hope of the gospel, the hope of eternal life, the hope of the glory of God, the hope of Israel, and the blessed hope, to name some of them. When the believer is called upon to "give a defense" of his faith, it is in reference to "the hope that *is* in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). The purpose of this series is to explore the dimensions of that hope that is within us. Since our culture is succumbing more and more to secularism, consumerism, and even paganism, it is more imperative than ever that the believer be able to contend for "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," as Jude 3 puts it. Since the believer has been called "in one hope of your calling," as Eph. 4:4 puts it, this series assumes that the Christian makes an effective defense of his faith only in reference to that one hope.

Hope never disappoints, Rom. 5:5 assures us, which may be one way of saying that hope never loses an argument, and that because anyone who bears "the living hope" in his heart does not have to argue his religion. If hope is one of the three things that abide forever, along with faith and love, it is because there is no way to defeat it or to argue against it. Rope stills the anxious heart in the direst of circumstances and gives courage to the persecuted in the face of death itself. The clever skeptic can turn our learned arguments against us, but he is at a loss to deal with "the hope of glory" that springs eternal in the heart of the true believer. It is noteworthy that when Paul made his defense before Roman authorities he said, "I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers" (Acts 26:6). We too would do well when we speak of our faith to talk about hope. Hope is what our despairing world longs for, even when it does not realize it.

That the apostle Paul would name "one hope" among the seven basic principles that undergird the faith, and that he would include it among the only three values that are eternal, is evidence enough of its significance.

But the Scriptures go beyond this and tell us what hope does for us, such as in Ps. 31:24 where hope is said to sustain us so that we can "Be of good cheer." Ps. 119:74 shows that hope makes us glad. Paul says it was hope that gave him boldness of speech (2 Cor. 3:12), and in Rom.12:12 he refers to "rejoicing in hope." Even more impressive is 1 Jn. 3:3, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure," which is surely one of the most remarkable promises in the Bible. Hope empowers us to live a pure life in this sinful world!

We anticipate a joyous and exciting study over the next two years as we look into various dimensions of the hope of the believer. We have hope in reference to ongoing history, as to what God will do in our world in fulfilling His purposes. We have hope that He who sits upon the throne will make all things new, that there will be new heavens and a new earth. We have hope in the eventual triumph of the gospel, that one day God's kingdom will more gloriously enter into human history. We have hope both in the redemption of nature and the redemption of our bodies -new bodies conformed to the image of Christ's body. We have hope of heaven and eternal life.

We will study in particular what Paul calls "the blessed hope" and see how it relates to the coming of our Lord. We will even dare to look into Paul's visit to Paradise to see what it reveals about the believer's hope. Then there is the "exceeding great joy" that is born of the believer's hope. These are suggestions of what we have before us in this study.

In this introductory essay I want to lay a firm foundation by pointing out that hope in God is the basis of all hope. Our thesis is that "the God of hope," to use Paul's great phrase, is the ground of all the believer can ever hope for, whether in reference to this world or the world that is to come.

A key passage supporting this thesis is Rom. 15:13: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." This verse has it all: hope, joy, peace, faith, power, God, Holy Spirit. The apostle's plea is to believe in God, the God of hope. Joy and peace are born of believing, and the believer abounds in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The point is that all the blessings -joy, peace, hope- are grounded in trust in God. If we truly believe in God to make good on His promises, we will abound in hope. When professed Christians are despondent and discouraged and have given up all hope, we can only conclude that they do not trust God to do what He has promised.

Our thesis that hope is girded by faith in God is evident in the Old Covenant Scriptures. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is in the Lord," Jer. 17:7 tells us, and in verse 13 of the same chapter God is referred to as "the hope of Israel." Joel 3:16 describes God as "the hope of His people," while Ps. 146:5 says, "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Again and again David prayed in the Psalms, "In you, 0 Lord, I hope," and "You are my hope, 0 Lord God." So God is not only the giver of hope but He is the object of hope. This means that if we have hope of eternal life we first hope in God.

What is said of God in the Old Covenant Scriptures is said of Christ in the Scriptures of the New Covenant, the most impressive instance being Col. 1:27: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." In 1 Tim. 1:1' our Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as "our hope," and in 1 Cor. 15:19

Paul speaks of having hope in Christ both in this world and the next. That this is especially an apostolic doctrine is evident from the fact that hope is never referred to in the teaching of Christ, nor does the word even appear in the gospels in the sense that it is used in the apostolic epistles. Jesus did not teach about the hope of the believer as much as he *was* that hope. Jesus is the hope of the church because all the promises are in him, as Paul so meaningfully puts it in 2 Cor. 1:20: "For all the promises of God in Christ are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through Him."

In Rom. 5:2 Paul seems to combine the emphasis of both the Old and New Testament of hope being in God and Christ: "through Christ we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." While he rejoices in the hope of the glory of God, the context shows that he sees Christ as the expression of the glory of God. He has already said in the last verse of chapter 4 that Christ was crucified for our sins and was raised for our justification. Then he begins with *Therefore* in chapter 5. One important rule of interpretation is that when you come to a "therefore" stop and ask what it is there for!

The apostle writes "Therefore" and goes on to speak of peace with God and hope in the glory of God. Since Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead so that we might be righteous, we have peace and hope. The hope we have is of all the glory of God that is revealed in Christ. Then he makes a very significant point: he glories in suffering because it produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character produces hope. It all leads to hope! Of hope he goes on to say, "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us." Notice that he relates hope to the presence of the Holy Spirit as he does in Rom. 15:13, as we have seen.

Hope does not disappoint! That could be the title of this first installment, but what we *are* to see is that hope does not disappoint because hope is in God. The *Jerusalem Bible* has "Hope is not deceitful," which captures the idea that when our hope is in God it never turns onus. We can count on God to do as He has promised. He will not disappoint us. Men may, even friends may. but God never will. Hope in God never disappoints!

Not only may men disappoint or deceive us, but riches as well, including CD's, Social Security, retirement plans, and all the rest. In 1 Tim. 6:17-19 Paul urges Timothy to warn those who are rich in this present world "not to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." Trust is used here much as hope is used elsewhere. The rich are not to hope in their riches, which will disappoint, but in God who can be trusted. He does not tell the rich that they must give up their riches, but not to trust in their riches. He rather tells them to do good with their money and to use it to "store up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Here the line is clearly drawn: we put our hope in God or in the riches and securities of this world. One is certain, the other uncertain; one is reliable, the other is deceitful. In the culture in which 1 Timothy was written all of us would be considered rich. If you have food in the cupboard or in the freezer, or if you can buy as you please at the market, then you are rich in comparison to the majority of people in the world. And in 1 Tim. 6 we the rich are handed a sober warning: not to trust in the uncertain things of this world. When we do we have no real hope. When we trust in the God of hope we can rejoice in that hope with exceeding joy.

Joy and hope! They are inseparable as we shall show in our next. —*the Editor*

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WHAT DIPLOMATS TEACH US ABOUT UNITY

As we enter a new year we can be thankful that things are quieter around the world than they have been in a long time. We have a new word that expresses this, *glastnost,* which comes out of Russia of all places. The atmosphere between the superpowers is certainly quieter, and we can now talk about disarmament with some real hope of progress. Conditions are improving in war-torn Afghanistan. There is a diplomatic breakthrough in the apparent impasse between the Israelis and the Palestinians. There is real hope for democracy in South Korea, Chile, Pakistan, and Brazil. Economic and political reform are not only a possibility in the Soviet Union but in the Republic of China and Eastern Europe as well.

These may be indicators that the kingdom of God on earth is drawing nearer, though that may be saying too much in a world where there are still 34 wars going on. But surely if we have more peace or even the hope of more peace and if we are moving toward proximate justice among the peoples of the world, then the rule and will of God are closer than before. And is that not what the kingdom of God is all about, doing God's will on earth as it is done in heaven? And is that not how the kingdom comes, like the slow but powerful growth of the mustard seed and the effectual working of leaven - slowly, perhaps indiscernibly, but surely.

The recent development that especially encourages me is what has happened in southwest Africa. A civil war has raged in Angola and Namibia for 13 years. Cuba and South Africa have been involved with such intensity that it looked as if the conflict was beyond solution. But now accords have been signed to the effect that Cuba will withdraw its 50,000 troops from Angola and South Africa its 30,000 from Namibia. There is now hope that the war will run down and that there will be peace. And Namibia will become a free and independent nation.

The American negotiating team, lead by Chester Crocker, deserves a lot of credit for what it has accomplished, and it shows what can be done when people are determined to have peace rather than war. Mr. Crocker and his team of a hundred associates have worked for eight years to bring about this diplomatic miracle in southwest Africa. Surely the "leaven" of God's kingdom is at work when warring nations lay down their arms, quit their fighting, and go home.

As I followed this exciting story I noted some lessons to be learned by those of us who seek a far greater peace, a peace that might well lead to the peace of the entire world — peace and unity among all Christians. In an interview with the media Mr. Crocker told how he was able to walk the road to peace in those war-ravaged countries. The points he made could serve as guidelines in the pursuit of Christian unity. And the victory won in Africa would pale in insignificance in comparison to the blessing it would be to the world if believers everywhere were led to love and accept one another even as Christ loves and accepts them.

First of all, Crocker observed, a peace effort must have a clearly defined policy. Those involved must know where they are headed, and there is to be no ambiguity about the goals in view. How important that is in the pursuit of Christian unity. We need to understand, for instance, that the goal of a united church is not that everyone believe everything alike, or that all the churches are to be melded into one conglomerate denomination. Nor does unity mean that we endorse or approve of all the views and practices of those with whom we are united. If unity does not allow for diversity, then there can be no unity. And yet there is to be a unity of doctrine in the essentials of the Christian faith. Otherwise unity will have no integrity.

Unity, first of all, is among Christians, not denominations. As believers come to love and accept one another more, denominational loyalties will mean less and they will eventually disappear. Unity means that as we accept each other as equals in spite of our differences in nonessentials we will increasingly find ways to do things together. If we cannot do everything together, we can surely do some things together, and that is unity. We can at first set modest goals, such as associating with each other more, and go on from there.

Mr. Crocker pointed to the importance of teamwork in achieving peace between nations. In negotiating with people who had never been able to get along with each other, he and his associates realized that *they* had to be of one mind and heart and to pursue their goal as a team working together. Those of a divisive spirit make poor unitists. A lost and troubled world will be little influenced by a divided and warring church. Teamwork in Christian unity at least means that we can pray together in behalf of our common goal. Out of sincere prayer and commitment wonderful things will be wrought. Christians must come to realize who the real enemy is - that it is not other Christians, but the forces of evil out there in the world *and in the churches.*

Crocker found that the enemies that would destroy his efforts for peace in Africa were the pessimists who insisted that he was wasting his time. The differences were so great, they said, that nothing could be done. He noted that it takes a lot of patience to hang in year after year amid all the clamor that the task is hopeless. This is probably the greatest barrier to the progress of Christian unity, the defeatist attitude that it cannot be done. Sectarian loyalties are too deeply entrenched, they tell us. But those who really believe our Lord's prayer for the unity of all believers, to the end that the world will be made whole, can never yield to the defeatist attitude. We must never give up, never!

When Crocker accounted for his success on the grounds "of having something that is clear and logical and sticking with it," I thought of how that applies to our plea for unity. We may say too much and try to do too much. Or we may not be clear enough or logical enough about what we mean by unity. If we concentrated on one or two crucial points, we might be more effective. Thomas Campbell put his finger on one such point in his *Declaration and Address* when he argued that since there will be no divisions in heaven there need be none on earth. Another point he made is that divisions among Christians is a sin and that we ought to stop sinning. Then there are the facts that Jesus prayed for unity and the apostles mandated it. Those points are clear enough and logical enough. But does the modern church really want clarity and logic when it comes to unity? That is our challenge.

Finally, Crocker told the press that a mediator for peace has to he well informed. I was impressed that he would report that "We invested a lot in learning about the decision making of the other parties, about the ways their leaders think and act." A true diplomat, that Crocker fellow. A poker player may not be able to read the other fellow's hand, but he has an advantage if he knows how he thinks and acts. We can believe that our negotiating team in Africa spent a lot of time during those eight years listening to the other fellows. Do we have any such diplomatic aptness in our dealings with those in other churches? Do we really understand how an Episcopalian thinks about the church or how a Roman Catholic sees tradition? What do we know about third world churches? Can we articulate the other person's faith, as if defending it, to his satisfaction, and with respect and humility? Can we explain Calvinism as well or better than a Calvinist, putting it in its best possible light, apart from any compulsion to lambast it as heresy. Have you ever asked yourself why one becomes a member of the Assemblies of God, a Seventh Day Adventist or a Mormon (the fastest growing denominations and the most missionary), sometimes even leaving us to join them? Do you think *understanding* would make us less judgmental and censorious?

We cannot be unitists if we do not know what we are talking about. Sectarianism owes much to ignorance, much of it willful. We must become students of unity, and this includes learning what other people believe and why they believe it. We must quit misrepresenting people and making caricature of what they believe. We must overcome the "us" and "them"

mentality, and one way to do this is to associate more with other Christians. Assign yourself a project, such as attending your next all-city Easter service, and go with the realization that you will be with people who believe with you the greatest story ever told. See yourself at an Easter service in a Moslem city where you would be almost alone. Do things that will help you to discover that all Christians have far more in common than they have differences. And for a change let's accentuate the common ground, and consider that common ground just may be the answer to all our divisions. —*the Editor*

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WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU TURN 70

Had Cecil Hook not written to me with the presumption that I would be saying something in this journal about "your threescore and ten" I probably would not be writing this piece. Since he recently turned 70 himself, he may have been looking for sympathy or company or maybe even advice. But he has lots of company -"America is greying," they say. Everyone is getting older, that's for sure, and one greys long before he's 70.

Anyway, I'm writing about turning 70, especially in terms of what one should do when she turns 70. I'll start by telling what I did on my "threescore and ten," except that it is really the day before, the eve of my 70th, for tomorrow, my birthday, is Sunday, and I don't sit down to this word processor on Sundays. The Lord's day is always special - going to church several times, including a visit to some church besides my own; calling a ta nursing home; visiting with people. Saturdays are more routine, and this Saturday, "my last day this side of 70," as I put it to Ouida, is a typical Saturday.

I was up at 4:30 a.m. to help Ouida with Mother Pitts then back to bed until 6 a.m. By 6:30 I began my two-mile run down Windsor Drive and back, which I do each day except Sunday. I look forward to it and find it invigorating, spiritually as well as physically.

Still in my jogging gear, I then spend an hour and a half at my desk reading, *devotionally* one might say, for this is time for soul-searching reading (it is really *study)* that I probably would not get done if I did not do it early on. I always have assignments for these *90* minutes. One thing I *am* now doing is reading through Calvin's *Institutes on the Christian Religion*, little by little. I find myself identifying with the old reformer as he grapples with weighty theological issues, even when I do not always agree with him. I appreciate his devotion to the Scriptures and his commitment to the sovereignty of God. And the older I get the more

convinced I am that Calvin was far more right than he was wrong. If one allows him to speak for himself rather than to listen to all the representations of Calvinism, then Calvin comes out with high marks. And does he ever challenge the reader to think!

This morning Calvin was working with the proposition that one is able to understand the mysteries of God only insofaras he is illuminated by God's grace. At one point he puts it this way, "Nothing is accomplished by preaching unless the inner teacher, the Spirit, opens the way into our minds." He quotes Paul in 1 Cor. 2:14 to the effect that "the natural man," whom Calvin defines as one who trusts in the light of nature or in his own capacities, cannot receive the things of God since they are spiritually discerned. He refers to David as one of great wisdom, and yet he prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things from thy law" (Ps. 119:18). He laid on me a verse I had not seen before: "With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9). To Calvin this means that God gives us light (illumination) so that we can see His light. He also drew heavily from Paul in Eph. 1:17-18 where the apostle speaks of "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" so that you can know what is the hope of His calling. Then there is Jer. 24:7, "I will give them a heart to know me," and Jn. 6:44 where our Lord says, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." To Calvin these passages show that God must "touch men's hearts" (1 Sam. 10:26) if they come to him. When you read Calvin you are exposed to a lot of Scripture, and it may be passages with which you are not familiar or that are interpreted differently. That is good for us!

Then I read portions from both Testaments, along with appropriate commentary. I am presently reading through H. L. Ellison's translation and commentary of Exodus. This morning I was in Ex. 28 where the elegant garments of Aaron the high priest are described. Ellison drew the contrast between Aaron as a representative of God to the people dressed in "gold, blue, and purple and scarlet stuff, and fine twined linen" and the more perfect representation of God who came in the form of a poor Galilean villager. I agreed with him that "One may therefore reasonably question the justification for ornate ecclesiastical robes." I was reminded that when the high priest went before God he wore over his breast the names of the twelve tribes engraved on precious stones, indicating, we may presume, that he represented these people. When our High Priest went to the Cross and into the presence of God he wore our names in his heart, representing us in the death he died.

In the New Testament I am presently going through William Barclay's translation and commentary on Matthew, and this a.m. I read the section on Mt. 12:43-45, which Barclay refers to as "The Peril of the Empty Heart," drawn from Jesus' parable of the house haunted by an evil spirit. When the spirit is driven out, he soon returns and brings seven more spirits with him, so that the last state of the person is worse than the first. "So it is with this evil generation," Jesus concludes. The point is that while the haunted house was swept clean of its

evil inhabitant it was left empty, allowing the evil spirit to return with even greater power. Barclay notes that while evil can be driven from us it is never destroyed, and so it stands ready for another attack. We must therefore fill the house with good things. Barclay catches the essence with, "A man's life must not only be sterilized from evil; it must be fructified to good." It is the willful emptiness and vapidness of our lives, our refusal to draw upon the great resources of power available to us, that Jesus is condemning.

I took time at this early hour to call a family in Illinois, a member of which was recently diagnosed as having cancer. They had called to tell us when I was not home. They are dear friends of many years, and we know this is a hard time for them. I reminded them of the power of believing and of our assurance as believers that no matter what happens everything will be all right. I shared with them the verse that I had memorized for today, one that Calvin had referred to as being so dear to St. Augustine, Ps. 57:1. It takes on special meaning when we realize that David, a man after God's own heart, was inspired to write those lines while he was hiding in a cave from the fury of King Saul.

> Be merciful to me, 0 God, be merciful to me!
> For my soul trusts in You;
> And in the shadow of Your Wings I will make my refuge,
> Until these calamities have passed by.

At 8:30 I dashed upstairs to dress in time to meet Ouida for breakfast and to catch the news for the day. I always have a point to make ora question to ask Ouida, usually drawn from my morning study. When I laid on her a little more of Calvin, particularly his idea that a person cannot even will to do good except as God grants grace, she responded with "That puts the onus on God!" When I quoted her one of Calvin's prooftexts, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" Philip. 2:13), she conceded that Calvin had a point. She could live with the idea when I assured her that Calvin did not rule out human responsibility.

Then it was back to my study to sort and read mail, answer letters, spend time on the phone, and, with Ouida now joining me, ordering and sending out books, paying bills, etc. As there is time I think about the next issue of this journal, and this a.m. I got started on this piece.

After lunch I take another hour and a half for a read-myself-to-sleep nap, and this is when I read *The Christian Science Monitor,* which is surely one of the great newspapers of the world and among the most objective and unbiased. It is superb in its international coverage. In every issue there are substantive articles on some culture far removed from our own. Today there were articles on South Korea's unfinished revolution, Muslin fundamentalism in Afghanistan,

and the progress of Solidarity in Poland. The editorials are also excellent, relevant and hard hitting. Recently there was a "Memo to Bush," urging him to say certain things in his inaugural address and then to act upon them, one being that he would be the President of all the people, and that he would reach out to the millions of blacks who did not want him as President, and thus make an effort to unite the nation rather than having two nations, one white and one black. I was so impressed by the editorial that I clipped it and sent it to our Republican senator from Texas, Phil Gramm, with an attending note, urging him to see to it that the editorial got to the Bush people, that he could probably get their attention better than I could. I have learned that notes and letters to politicians are not usually ignored. The Bush staff would almost certainly notice the *Monitor* editorial anyway, but when they get clipped copies of something with attending notes, it gets their attention. I am hopeful the next President will be more obviously sensitive to the plight of the poor black people and all minorities.

I found time on my birthday eve to rake leaves and gather pecans. Little by little we have picked up about 40 pounds, a bumper crop this year. It is even more fun to sit alongside Ouida and shell them! Following supper I read to Ouida and Mother Pitts from the Scriptures and other devotional material, and we commit ourselves to the Lord's safekeeping. Then again after retiring I read to Ouida, a few pages at a time, from something special. Presently we are reading *The City of Joy*, a moving story of life in a slum "city" in Calcutta.

Tonight we went to our church's Christmas progressive dinner, now a tradition with us. We went to one home for appetizers. There we found out where we were to go for dinner, and it is always fun to see who ends up at what house. Then we all go to one large home for dessert, with fellowship on into the night. Delightful! Ouida was able to do this with me by leaving Mother Pitts for short periods, and by checking on her between one home and the next!

It is now a few days later. So went my birthday eve. On my birthday I visited two more churches in Denton, both new ones. Early a.m. I visited Unity of Denton Church, now meeting in a store front, but well organized and taking it seriously. In the evening I visited the new Mormon church, a large facility (gymnasium, etc) that they call their Stake Center. I had already visited their other church. They now have four stakes (congregations) meeting in the two facilities. That night they had a joint Christmas program, with choirs from all four stakes performing. I noticed that, unlike the Jehovah's Witnesses who sing only their own songs, the Mormon hymnal is replete with great songs of the church, Wesley, Luther, Watts, Newman, etc., as well as their own. A good sign. I harbor hopes that the Mormons may one day (50 years?) be orthodox Christians. I intend to write about all these visits in detail in my ongoing series. I also attended my own Church of Christ, and we lit the third candle of Advent along with all other churches who follow the church calendar.

I also visited with several at a nursing home, one being my young friend Chris, who is a quadriplegic. I told him that he was young and I old and that we might not be in this world together for much longer, but that I will one day see him without his wheelchair, walking and talking and praising God, for there is One who sits on His throne in heaven, who promises that He will one day make all things new, and that includes Chris. He can't talk to me but he understands what I say, and he really cottoned to that. He gave me a big smile and tried the best he could, with his deformed arms, to hug my neck.

In preparing for this piece I made a list of words that might serve as principles on how to live when you turn 70, but they might well apply to any age. Ideas have consequences even at age 70. Here is what I came up with.

Work. Without work life has no meaning. We might change pace but we can never stop working. Work in this world prepares us for the work we will do in another world. Retiring from work is unthinkable.

Perspective. We must ever deepen and broaden our perspective, and as the philosopher William James put it, "imagine foreign states of mind," such as seeing life as it appears to an unemployed black man or to an abused child or a battered wife. If we had a world-view of things, we might find it liberating even if painful.

Tentativeness. When we are really free to think, conclusions need not be final. A free person can say, "This is how I see it 'as of now,' but I might change my mind." Ideas need not be cut and dried. We should be free to send up trial balloons. If they are shot down, well and good. We have learned something. There are of course absolutes, but everything does not have to be.

Commitment. Life lacks integrity without commitment, whether to one's work, marriage, church, country, friends. It is those who hang in year after year, through thick and thin alike, who are the real builders, whether of homes, churches, or nations.

Adventure. An old Indian proverb is that one can't cross the sea by standing and looking at the water. One of our own is "Nothing ventured, nothing gained," and that is the difference in many people's lives. We have to go on taking chances, all the way. The greatest adventure of all is to love, which bears all thing, hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things.

Precipitousness. This big word goes far in saying what life is all about. We have to take risks and live dangerously, such as being willing to think and to be different if need be. It might mean associating with the rejects of church and society, like Jesus did.

Resilience. Buoyancy and recovery power are evidence of inner strength. It is the ability to bounce back. If you fall, pick up something while you're down! Life will level lethal blows, so we must have the resources of power to take it and to heal. It is those who refuse to bend who break. Poise, grace under pressure, is a precious virtue.

History-conscious. History matters. The struggle of our parents and our forefathers matters. The martyrdom of Polycarp, Hus, and Savonarola matters. What Luther, Calvin, and Campbell thought matters. The history of ideas and the struggle for truth matter. This is why the church is not guided by the Bible alone, but also by two thousand years of dedicated effort to understand and to interpret it aright. This makes us catholics in the truest sense.

Compromise. While we can never compromise the eternal verities, we must learn to make the reasonable compromises as we bargain with life and with self. Yieldingness is no mean virtue.

Gratitude. This is the antidote for greed and selfishness, for as we cultivate thankfulness for others and what they have done we think about ourselves less. Gratitude and humility are twin virtues and basic ingredients for a joyous life.

Philanthropy. If there is ever a universal religion this will have to be its basis, for we must come to look beyond ourselves to the good of others. We show our love for God by loving others. To do good for good's (God's) own sake is life's greatest principle.

This list could be extended on and on, for I think also of compassion, duty, simplicity (the simple life), frugality, and doggedness as virtues I highly prize. But these are enough to make my point, which is that at age 70 or any other age we have but one acceptable choice and that is to be principled by living by principles.

We are not to conclude that because Moses was supposed to have prayed "Threescore and ten are the years of a person's life, and if by reason of strength fourscore" that God has decreed for us only 70 or 80 years. Longevity is increasing these days and this may continue for millennia to come. Moses was not only lamenting the brevity of life, which will still be short even if the years are doubled, but the vanity of life as well. In the same verse he complains, "Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cutoff, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). There is a similar lament in Ps. 102:11: "My days are like a shadow that lengthens, And I wither away like grass." Then there is the great contrast, which is the ground of our hope, "But You, 0 Lord, shall endure forever." That he takes us to Himself when we "fly away" is what religion is about.

The point of it all is made in Ps. 90:12: "So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom." That is what one is to do when she turns 70 or 40. As we count the years, which is a sobering experience, let us always apply our hearts unto that wisdom that knows God and enjoys Him forever. — *the Editor*

> Hope writes the poetry of the boy, but memory that of the man. Man looks forward with smiles, but backward with sighs. Such is the wise providence of God. The cup of life is sweetness at the brim—the flavor is impaired as we drink deeper, and the dregs are made bitter that we may not struggle when it is taken from our lips.— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
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> Hope is the most beneficial of all the affections, and doth much to the prolongation of life, if it be not too often frustrated; but entertaineth the fancy with an expectation of good.— *Francis Bacon*

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Visiting Other Churches: New Series, No. 1 . . .

UNITY CHURCH: MIND CULT?

I am almost finished with my project of visiting every church in my home town of Denton, Texas. I am now looking out for those assemblies in homes, warehouses, store fronts, hotels, and community rooms. Some are very tiny, such as when I sat with the Quakers in a home where there were just four of us. I am in that shady area of what is a church and what isn't. One family in a poor part of town has a sign on their house indicating that it is a "gospel mission" where the hungry can get a meal and folk can pray together. I plan to visit. A poor black Pentecostal group vacated the shack where they met before I got to them. A sign on the door indicates that they have moved across town. I will eventually visit them.

There have been a few new congregations organized since I began this project. Such is the case with Unity of Denton, which is part of an international body known as the Unity School of Christianity with headquarters in Unity Village, Mo. They are strong on organization and advertising, for while they are yet a small group in Denton and meet in a store front (which they have decorated nicely), they have lots of activities and take a large chunk of the free advertising on the church page of the local paper. I was surprised to see that they have two services on Sunday morning and activities all week. They emphasize meditation (including classes for children), healing ("You can heal your life"), and yoga (mind control techniques

drawn from Hinduism), which makes them something like first cousins of Christian Science, with which they share common origins. Classes through the week provide training in these disciplines. I took note of an announcement for "World Peace Meditation."

Their special vocabulary is suggestive of oriental influence, such as visualization and affirmation, going into silence, and "If we are willing to do the mental work, almost anything can be healed." You will note the subtle doctrine of salvation (healing) by works, *mental* works. One of their tracts emanating from Unity Village is titled "A Prosperity Meditation," the gist of which is that one can be healthy, wealthy, and wise through meditation. Prosperity results from tapping the resources that are from within, "a process of growth and fulfillment," as the tract puts ii

Another tract from Unity Village is "The Light That Shines For You," which one might suppose would be a reference to "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it" or to "the light of the world," familiar biblical references to the entrance of Jesus Christ into human history. But the Unity philosophy places little emphasis upon the Christ of history who died and rose again. Like the Christian Scientists, they see Christ as the Mind that is within, the true Self, Self-Fulfillment, or some such Gnostic idea. In this tract the light that shines for you is an artificially lighted room in Unity Village where "Silent Unity" consists of continual prayers, day and night, that reach out to those in need. That lighted prayer room has not had a dark moment during the 90 years of Unity history. There is a number you can call, and the answer will be "Silent Unity," and you can state your need. That is the light that shines for you.

Another tract, called "The Golden Key," identifies the golden key as scientific prayer, and the treasure that the key unlocks is harmony and happiness. Unity does not deal with sin as a reality and so there is no such thing as salvation in any orthodox Christian sense. The tract assures the reader that scientific prayer will get one out of any difficulty. There is this incredibly simplistic approach to life's weighty problems:

> All you have to do is this: Stop thinking about the difficuty, whatever it is, and think about God instead. This is the complete rule, and if only you will do this, the trouble, whatever it is, will disappear. It makes no difference what kind of trouble it is. It may be a big thing or a little thing; it may concern health, finance, a lawsuit, a quarrel, an accident, or anything else conceivable, but whatever it is, stop thinking about it and think of God instead - that is all you have to do.

This runs counter to the Biblical teaching on prayer, which is not intended as an escape from life's difficulties but for the courage to persevere. Our Lord assures us that in this world we will have tribulation (Jn. 16:33), and all the yoga of the orient and all the "Master Mind" of Unity will not change that fact, but through prayer the Lord gives us the strength to bear it, even with good cheer. You would be ill-advised to take the above prescription to a hospital or a nursing home and recommend it to those afflicted with Parkinson's disease, ADS, cancer, or Alzheimer's. All they have to do is to stop thinking about it and think about God! But you would be well-advised to share with them your trust that God will be with us through any difficulty, and you could pray the Lord's prayer with them and read the 23rd Psalm. That is what religion is about instead of being an escape hatch.

I attended the early service one Sunday at Unity of Denton where no more than eight or ten were assembled. The regular pastor, a woman, was absent. The service, led by her substitute, began with an invocation: "The presence of Christ within me establishes peace and harmony in my life. I am serene." We sang several hymns, including *Kum ba yah, my Lord* and *Let There Be Peace on Earth.* There was special music and reading from the Scriptures. A unique feature was a period of meditation; another was the "Blessing" they say in unison, reading from the Order of Worship, such as "Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give and all that I receive."

The service impressed me as perfunctory and matter of fact. It was not only informal but lighthearted. They probably intended to create a friendly, low key atmosphere (such as joking with each other), but it came across as shallow and insincere. There was certainly no sense of urgency that one feels at some churches. This may be because they do not think of themselves as "church" and they almost make light of "Sunday service." An example:

> Unity is a church, but a new and different kind of church. It has teachings, but not a creed. It is more a weekday application of spiritual principles to daily problems than it is a Sunday service. Unity has students, but demands no affiliation. It is more a movement than a body of believers.

In comparison to other churches Unity may rightly be seen as a cult, which means that it has radical or extreme features and is significantly different from what is considered normative in religion. Some cults are socially radical, even macabre and ghastly in their behavior, blindly following the unpredictable antics of some guru, such as Jim Jones' People's Church, which drank poison at his behest. Others are politically radical, such as the Black Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses. Others are radically prophetic, ushering in some new age, such as Swedenborgianism, Mormonism, and Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. Still others are radically syncretistic in that they claim to be the essence of all religions and are usually Eastern in origin, such as the Bahai faith and the Rosicrucian fellowship. Others are radically mystical and even occult, such as Spiritism.

Then there are those cults that are radically intellectual and sophisticated, making a religion of psychology, meditation, yoga, universal soul, and define God and Christ as "Mind." These are legion and include Christian Science, New Thought, Theosophy, and Unity. These cults are generally more respected in society, not only because they attract more sophisticated and well-to-do people, but also because they emphasize healing and thereby make some worthwhile contribution or appear to. They also have the advantage of basing their religion on what has generally come to be accepted as true, even if they overdo it, which is that the mind has great influence over the body.

Cults have other common characteristics, such as being founded by and evolving around some charismatic and colorful figure, who are often great promoters and organizers. oddly enough these leaders are often women or man and wife teams. Unity, for instance traces its beginnings to Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, who in turn were influenced by Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy.

Another common trait is extra-Biblical revelation. They have their own Bibles, special revelation, "Key to the Scriptures," or whatever. Or they so allegorize and spiritualize the Scriptures as to significantly distort their meaning. And so they may be accused of using Biblical terminology but confusing the meaning with a lot of mumbo-jumbo. The Unity movement is particularly guilty of this.

Unity literature, for example, speaks of the atonement as "agreement C reconciliation of man's mind with divine Mind through the superconsciousness Christ-mind," which hardly reflects the Bible's plain language, such as "God made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God through Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). The Holy Spirit is defined as "The very spirit of truth lying latent within us, each and every one." The resurrection is spiritualized into their doctrine of the reincarnation. It is understandable, therefore, that they would say of the Bible: "Scripture may be a satisfactory authority for those who are not themselves in direct communion with the Lord." And who is the Lord? "This Christ or perfect-man idea existing eternally in divine Mind is the true, spiritual, higher-self of every individual."

Unity of Denton is therefore seriously at variance with historic, Biblical Christianity. While we will love and respect them as neighbors, we can only view their system as a challenge to the apostolic faith. We will meet the challenge in the spirit of Christ and by an appeal to the great facts of the gospel, authenticated by those who were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. —*the Editor*

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BEING GOD'S HERO AND NOT KNOWING IT

Jim Gregory

Somewhere in his writings Alexander Campbell described God's heroes as being persons not of high office, fame, or fortune, but rather those who are humble, those who esteem others greater than themselves and are kind and gentle. God's hero is one who lends a helping hand to the needy and a shoulder of comfort to those who mourn. He is a friend to the friendless and a companion to the lonely.

God's heroes are identified in Mt. 25:34-40:

> Then the king will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer Him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and gave you drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" The king will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

These verses show that one is God's hero when he or she is righteous before God. They also show that one may be God's hero without knowing it, for those who had shown mercy to those in need did not realize they were doing it to Christ. "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drank?," they asked. They seemed surprised that the King would even take notice of their deeds, much less equate them as acts of love toward Himself. By being humble and loving servants they had unknowingly become God's heroes.

For many years my view of being a Christian was one of always doing my duty in every area of my life. Being a Christian was a life of do's and don'ts, and I always tried to do more do's than don'ts. I was a miserable failure, for the don'ts always outnumbered the do's. I was trapped! I could never do enough do's or refrain from enough don'ts. The harder I tried the morel failed. Oh, what a wretched man I was!

Then God in His mercy brought one into my life that made all the difference. She showed me such truths as are revealed in Lk.17: 10: "So you also when you have done all that was your duty to do, say, 'We are unworthy, for we have done that which was our duty to do.'" What an eye-opener that was to me! Now I realized that even if I did all the do's and none of the don'ts I would still be an unprofitable servant.

She also helped me to see that my works-oriented, earn-your-salvation theology that I thought I found in the book of James was not that way at all. I came to see that James was saying what Jesus said in Mt. 7, "By their fruits you will know them." One day this woman, my patient guide, said to me, "An apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree, not in order to be an apple tree. A Christian bears the fruit of love because he is a Christian, not in order to be a Christian." I began to see the light. But it was not easy, even with her help. Sometimes she had to drag me along.

Finally she brought me *to Romans* and showed me the wondrous grace of God. Now I see that God saved me so that I can go on bearing fruit for Him, both in this world and in the world to come.

So, my darling wife Kady, who lovingly and patiently led me to peace and happiness in God's saving grace, I honor in this essay as one of God's heroes, even when she doesn't realize it. She is also the hero of my life. - *1119 George Washington Dr., Wichita, Ks. 67211*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

WCCC IN NEW ZEALAND

A high point of my recent world tour was to take part in the World Convention of Churches of Christ in Auckland, New Zealand. I am pleased to serve on the executive committee of the WCCC, which we hope will he an "umbrella convention" in that it will attract people from all segments of our Movement. This was the case in New Zeal-and more than at any other convention, which assembles every four years, for there was substantial representation from all three major wings, both in attendance and on the program. While Churches of Christ are still poorly represented in comparison to the Disciples and Christian Churches, I am hopeful that this will improve at the next assembly in Long Beach in 1992. We need to get the word out that this is an occasion of great fellowship, and once one is there he realizes how much we have in common and how much we need one another. A Disciples minister, for example, was telling me about his study group on the Campbell heritage. "We had a Church of Christ brother in our group and he really added a great deal to our discussion," he told me with pleasure. When another Disciples minister, who was in the study group that I lead, returned to the States he wrote as follows about me in a report to his church, which shows the impact that a new experience in fellowship among ourselves can have:

"We attended the Heritage Breakfasts at the Railton Hotel, conducted by Leroy Garrett, from Denton, Texas. He is an unusual person, being a Church of Christ (non-instrumental) minister, (not a parish minister), but operates similar to Roger Carstensen, in that he publishes a monthly magazine, entitled *Restoration Review.* He said he decided years ago, to ignore the differences between the three churches. He moves among all the Campbell-Stone churches and has a wide acquaintance among all three. He has served on the faculty of a college of each church. Those of us who are familiar with the Church of Christ (non-instrumental) can well appreciate how unusual a person he is. He is an outstanding example, in that we must accept each other as Christian brothers and sisters, regardless of the differences between our three groups.

This was the spirit that prevailed throughout the convention. The main lecturer, Lloyd Ogilvie, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, challenged us to take evangelism seriously, which underscored the convention theme, "Turning the World Upside Down." But the highlight was being with our people from all over the world. I fell in love with every one of them. I especially enjoyed visiting with Sir Garfield Todd, a native New Zealander and one time prime minister of Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, whose story of faith and courage amidst persecution and imprisonment would qualify him for canonization to sainthood, if Disciples canonized saints.

WE ARE CHANGING!

The Eastwood Christian Church and the White Rock Church of Christ, both in Dallas, recently shared in a "Fellowship In The Park," which because of the weather was held in the fellowship hall of the Church of Christ, which was filled to capacity in a glorious fellowship. Gene Shepherd, president of Dallas Christian College, and Charlie Coil, minister of the White Rock church, spoke on Restoration roots and their dreams of sharing in future activities.

Two other Dallas area churches, First Christian Church (Disciples) and Richardson East Church of Christ, both in Richardson, held their First Annual Combined Thanksgiving Service, which was hosted by the Disciples' church. It was not only well attended, but the fellowship was so meaningful that they were all left wondering why they waited so long to get together. It is now set as an annual affair - as a starter for a restored fellowship.

Some 300 leaders of Churches of Christ and Christian Churches (Independent) gathered in Akron in November for the sixth session of Restoration Forum. Now that the days of ugly debating and disfellowshipping are passing, they were able to enjoy each other's fellowship and study things of significance. Reuel Lemmons of the Church of Christ spoke on what the two churches are doing together, and Robert Fife of the Christian Church spoke on dreaming dreams together. As for dreams, I've long dreamed of such things as reported in these three

paragraphs, and I've never doubted that my dreams would come true, but I wasn't sure that I would live to see it all begin to happen. It has at last begun. PTL!

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READER'S EXCHANGE

Lately we have heard horrifying accounts of Christians who were caught fleeing Romania. Imprisonment and beatings are the general rule, but they keep trying to escape. One congregation barricaded itself inside its building in order to hold back government bulldozers. We hope to return to Romania and take food. Pray that this will be possible. — *Bill Smith, missionary in Austria*

Glasnost and perestroika are really translating into more religious freedom for Christians in the Soviet Union. More things are happening than the casual observer or tourist can observe. Computers and copy machines are being opened up to the Russian people. We no longer have to smuggle in miniature New Testaments. We can now mail full-sized Bibles to the people and be assured that they will not be confiscated. — *Stephen Bilak, missionary to the Slavic world*

This spring I audited a course in Restoration History taught by Dr. William Richardson, his final semester of teaching at Emmanuel. We used a number of textbooks. including yours. I thought you would be interested in knowing that he only assigned a few chapters from the other books, but he assigned twelve chapters from your book! I was especially helped by your book and read it in its entirety. — *Jim Shields, Professor Emeritus, Milligan College*

(We appreciate this commendation and pass it along so that you might be encouraged to read for yourself my *The Stone-Campbell Movement*, which you may order from us at $21.95 postpaid. — *Ed.)*

We have a seminar scheduled at the Quaker Ave. Church of Christ in April with John Willis of ACU, who will explicate the book of Amos. We are billing the seminar under the topic: "Making the Bible Live in Our Study." —*Tom Langford, Lubbock, Tx*

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BOOK NOTES

There is anew printing of F. F. Bruce's *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free,* which is a veritable library on Paul and his thought. We highly recommend it as a readable, reliable, and resourceful, over 500 pages worth, and only $21.95 postpaid.

Louis Cochran's novels on our pioneer preachers, *Raccoon John Smith* and *The Fool of God* (Alexander Campbell) are still in print but may not remain so. $10.95 each, postpaid.

A reprint edition of another book on Campbell by Perry Gresham, *The Sage of Bethany,* is now available at $12.95 post-paid. And still another is Alger Fitch's Alex*ander Campbell: Preacher of Reform and Reformer of Preaching.* $11.95 postpaid.

Again we recommend the controversial book by Walt Yancey, *Endangered Heritage,* which is an examination of some unique doctrines of the Church of Christ. Starting with our pioneers, allowing them to speak for themselves, he questions whether we have been true to our heritage. $12.95 postpaid.

We are pleased that many of our readers have purchased Faith Martin's *Call Me Blessed.* subtitled "The Emerging Christian Woman," which is a challenge to reexamine the woman's place in the church. $8.95 postpaid.

We can send you William Barclays *The Plain Man's Book of Prayers* and *More Prayers for the Plain Man.* $6.95 each.

You may order all five of our bound volumes of *Restoration Review,* which include the years 1977-1984, for only $40.00 postpaid. These are hard bound, matching volumes of high quality, with dust jackets. RESTORATION REVIEW, 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas 76201

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